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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.

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Wayside Gatherings.

Fires or Refrigerators ?

One of the real tests we might do well to apply to our Christian life is just this : Are we fires or refrigerators ? Do we attract or repel ? Are you one to whom people instinctively turn for confidence and help ? The greater the trouble people are in the more need is there for sympathy and tenderness. We might go far for a better definition of a friend than that given by the schoolboy : " A friend is someone who knows all about is and yet loves us just the same." That was the way with Jesus ; that must be our way, too. The world will not be won by marvellous preaching ; the world is only going to be won by Christian living—when those who bear the name of Christ are filled with the spirit of love and friendship."—Dr. Albert Peel.

* * *

At the National Free Church Council :

Viscount Cecil.

" If a man has read the New Testament attentively and doesn't hate war, he has wasted his time. . . . . Peace will not come by itself. You cannot get it without working for it and paying for it. There are vast moral and material interests against us. Don't underrate the difficulties. It is not for me to suggest what Christian ministers can do. I ask all of you to exert yourselves to increase the power of the League of Nations Union. I ask those ministers who have so great an influence to champion this cause. How can we preach Christianity unless we preach peace."

Dr. Peake.

" I stand with those who deplore our divisions and desire with all their hearts that the shattered unity of Christ's Church might be restored. I think of our separations as unhappy divisions ; though I recognise that under present circumstances some combinations would be unhappier still. I would have a unity in which the greatest elasticity should be not simply permitted but welcomed. Every variety of organisation ; every shade of belief consistent with loyalty to our central affirmations, every type of worship congenial to our varied temperament, should find in such a church its legitimate home."

" Our own deepest trouble is not obscurantism but anaemia, the thinness and poorness of spiritual life. In the records of the early Church we are impressed by the radiant joy, the infectious enthusiasm, the glowing hope, the ardent affection of those early days. Can we match that sense of liberation, that intoxicating rapture, that deep central bliss ? The problem is not simply that of making Christians but of making Christians of the best and highest type. And for this the loftiest morality is not enough. Religion is not just morality touched with emotion. It is the most tremendous force we know."

* * *

Christianity, an Adventure.

" All religion founded on personal experience rather than form and dogma needs new experiences which mean a continual venture of faith ; a passing from an old unsatisfactory state to something fresher and larger. Many refuse to embark on this adventure because they insist on clinging to old ideas and old beliefs which can find no place in a new sphere. Some are too fond of old loyalties to embrace a new unity. Others refuse because they are afraid of the suffering and sacrifice involved—But to gain truth and freedom and a larger life this adventure into the unknown must be taken. Christianity is nothing less than such an adventure."—The Christian World.

A.W.

Notes of the Month.

A Historical Manual.

We have pleasure in drawing the attention of our readers, in an especial manner, to the new Manual just published, detailing the origin and history of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. It is a manual drawn up by order of the General Synod, and they were exceptionally fortunate in securing the services of the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., our venerable and illustrious leader, who throughout a long life has devoted himself to minute and intimate knowledge of the streams of tendency which ultimately issued in a United Church in the year 1910. It is indeed a history of which the members of our Church may well be proud, for it indicates, from the year 1613 throughout its whole course, the sincere desire of truth-loving and stalwart learners of Jesus Christ to arrive at the certainty that should be verily believed among them. From this consideration it is well and profitable to be reminded that our congregations were founded and maintained by men of light and leading who were prepared to endure the wrench of parting from old associations and much obloquy in order to be true to the clear light which gradually dawned on their consciences.

The Manual is primarily designed that it may be found useful as a basis of lessons given to the young people in our Sunday Schools; but it is also a little book that should reach the hands of older members of our Churches. It contains details of historical facts calculated to inspire them with pride in the institutions with which they are connected and of their spiritual ancestry of whom they cannot possibly be ashamed. It should indeed make them feel that they are in the line of the faithful and the saintly who wrought valiantly for God and his truth in days gone by. It is a heritage that calls loudly for the enthusiastic devotion and unwearied perseverance of their descendants that they may not, through indifference and forgetfulness, be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Present day Church members, in the multiplicity of their interests and distractions, are apt to forget the care and forethought which secured for them the freedom and security they now enjoy—that freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. An earnest appeal should go forth at this juncture to our congregations generally to "look to the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole in the pit whence we are digged," that the freedom we now enjoy may not be jeopardised by any negligence or indifference on our part. With this object a historical survey as outlined in this Manual will aid them to a realisation of the difficult and somewhat tortuous path which their ancestors had to travel before ever it could be possible to arrive at our present position in the ecclesiastical world, namely, as the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Deep gratitude is therefore due and will be accorded to our venerated leader for this further evidence of his services to our Church and for his devotion to the principles for which it stands before the world.

* * *

Our Vacant Pulpits.

For a considerable time it has been a matter for regret that the pulpits of two of our Belfast Churches have been vacant for a somewhat lengthy period, and a third owing to the unfortunate and serious breakdown in health of a very successful and energetic minlster, the Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A. His many friends will be cheered by the good news that his general health has greatly improved in Switzerland and that the doctor's report is very hopeful. The York Street Congregation are to be congratulated on the spirit in which they have carried their services and activites in the absence of their devoted minister. Their friends and admirers will wish them and Mr. Agnew a speedy and permanent recovery of his health.

The First Presbyterian Church are to be congratulated on securing the services of an able minister in the Rev. Nicol Cross, M.A., of Hampstead. It is understood that he will undertake full charge of the pulpit on Sunday, June 24th. When that takes place we anticipate a further era of prosperity to this historic church. We also congratulate the members of the First Presbyterian Church on the spirit with which they have maintained their various institutions during the vacancy.

The pulpit of Mountpottinger Church after the departure of Rev. M. Watkins has been vacant ever since and at the present time there is no immediate prospect of a settlement. Our readers will be pleased to understand that the services have been adequately maintained and that devoted members are fostering the Church institution with ability.

Readers of this Magazine will sympathise with these churches in the unusual event of three neighbouring congregations being without resident ministers at practically the same time; and the members of said churches will not withhold a mead of praise to those ministers who have ungrudgingly given their services as ministers in charge. Several of our ministers have been called upon to serve in this capacity, sometimes at some inconvenience to themselves.

Correspondence.

The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by Correspondents.
All manuscripts should be sent not later than the 16th of each month to Rev. D. J. Williams, The Manse, Killinchy, Co. Down

Clinic Alexandre,
Leysin,
Switzerland,
12th April.

Dear Sir.—I have received so many letters from members of our different congregations to which I cannot reply that I trust you will allow me a little space in the NON-SUBSCRIBER. I am at the moment in a Private Nursing Home in Berne under a Specialist where he sent me for an operation. He now considers that it is not advisable to operate for two reasons, one that it would be dangerous in my present condition and the other that there is a very good chance of my recovering without it, with time and care, which latter opinion is contrary to general medical ideas. We can only hope that it will be so. Meanwhile I am very greatly improved as far as my general health is concerned.

Leysin is a small village in French Switzerland, high up on a mountainside, overlooking the great valley of the Rhone and the Dents du Midi. All round are the Clinics for Sun Cure, ranging from great establishments like the Grand Central Hotel down to humble châlets where poor patients earn something toward their expenses by basket work. Two years is said to be the average time spent here. It is long, but when we remember that 80% of those who come here return home cured of a disease which in Ireland would probably be fatal we cannot complain. I was astonished to find that from our own small country come 25% of the patients here. Out of six English speaking pecple in my own Clinic three of us are Irish. The majority are Germans, with a few French but it is said that amongst the 3,000 patients one can find represented every country in the world.

Our day begins at 6 a.m., when after a breakfast of a small piece of bread and an abundance of coffee we are wheeled out on the balcony to hail the rising sun. Although our clothing is little more than that which we are told was worn in Eden and the snow is often two feet deep around us, it does not seem to be cold, except when the sun passes behind a cloud when we immediately seek our blankets. From one o'clock till three-thirty, the rule all over the village is absolute silence during which we are supposed to sleep. After this those able to walk are allowed out for perhaps two hours. At seven o'clock we dine together. So far I have been the only Irishman at table, the remainder being German, Dutch, French and Swiss. We speak an International Language of our own with such success that I was able to make reasonably clear the exact theological position of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, a task in which I fear I often failed in at home. At 9-30 we go to bed.

The Church Service in the Swiss Church on Sunday proved highly interesting. The Service is held at 10-30. The interior of the building is as like one of our own country churches as one could imagine. The minister wears the old white "banns" and Geneva Gown. The collection is taken up in "warming pans" such as adorn many of our vestries by an elder who might have come with me from far-off County Down. The service corresponds almost exactly to the one we have in York Street. The difference is that the people sit to sing and perhaps also that they do sing. There is no choir and none seems to be needed. The Church is always full and it is indeed an inspiration to hear the Psalms of David sometimes to an old familiar tune. All stand to pray, as do some of our own folk still. It is a custom which we might well encourage, for visitors to our churches have often complained that from the attitude of our people one could not distinguish the sermon from the prayer. In our church at Moira it was once the custom to turn our backs to the pulpit during the prayer. I was astonished to find the custom also exists in some of the churches here and I could not to but reflect on the links that bind Geneva,

Scotland and Ulster across hundreds of miles and hundreds of years of time. I came away feeling much more at home than I had done and reflecting much. Here Protestantism has as great a hold on the people as the Church of Rome with us. The Churches are full and the Services brighter and inspiring and the preachers all appear to hold the attention of their people. On Sunday Evening I attended a play in the Church Hall. It depicted a story of the Reformation. I also attended the Annual Meeting of the Congregation and found another link with home, for the Church was in debt.

The theology is strictly orthodox but not crudely so, indeed, many of our own people would have approved of all I have so far heard. Perhaps some other time I shall be able to say more on this subject.

I attended the English Service later. The congregation consisted of about twenty of whom only four were men. No one joined in the singing and the contrast between that service and the hearty enthusiastic gathering in the morning gave me much to think of. Only a sense of duty which I do not feel would take me again to the English Service while I shall feel a loss not to be able to attend the Service conducted in a foreign tongue. Others must feel the same for I have discovered that a number of Scotch folk also attend the Swiss Service. The Anglican service is designed that the people may take part in it. Those who are born in that communion may, but for those not accustomed to it there is a feeling of being but an onlooker. The experiences of that Sunday convinced me more than ever of the folly of introducing into our Churches at home what is at best an imitation of a service less appealing to such people as ours than a service conducted in a foreign tongue, but according to the customs of their fathers. The Anglican service is beautiful and where it is used a congregation may become attached to it, but I am certain that it is a mistake to introduce it in any Church which desires to make converts in an atmosphere such as that of Scotland or Ulster. The old Presbyterian Service is often said to be wearisome but it need not be so, as, apparently, they have realised here. Bright hymns in which the people may join ; one lesson appropriate to the sermon and interesting for its own sake ; a simple prayer and a sermon brought into touch with their daily lives and the history of their country, such was the plan my friend the Swiss Pastor told me they work on, and then a Sabbath kept very much as God's day, but yet with nothing Pharisaical about it.

The second Sunday was " Family Day " and in the afternoon I watched through glasses the Pastor and his congregation playing games in a field on the mountain side. That night a Professor gave a lantern lecture on " The Ideal Home." The third Sunday in the afternoon the whole congregation on bicycles, sledges and every means of conveyance they could get went down the valley to assist the people of another village in tidying up the little church-yard after the damage done by a land slide. Here the faith lives and is strong and vital and with no " Orders " to protect it from Rome which is very near and no Evangelists filling the Kirks from fear of Hell, there is yet no great problem of empty seats or lapsed masses. Ulster's religion came from here and from here I think Ulster might yet learn something of how that faith can be adapted to suit the present times with the Kirk still a power, but a power for good and the Sabbath still the Sabbath and yet neither a harsh and weary idleness nor a tiring worldly holiday but a pleasant day of change and refreshment for the soul as it was intended to be.

Now I fear I have trespassed on your space. I shall always be pleased to receive letters from home but I fear that I cannot reply for those letters which I must write exceed what I am permitted.

I will add that I look forward to the NON-SUBSCRIBER as I am sure many of our people do who are far from home and that indeed is one reason why we should strive to continue the Magazine for without it there would be no record at all of our doings for the large numbers of our community who are scattered abroad.

Yours sincerely, A. L. AGNEW.

Dr. Barnes as Modern Elijah.

The Rev. Nicol Cross, M.A., minister elect of the First Presbyterian Church was the preacher on Sunday, April 15th, when he conducted the services Morning and Evening to large congregations. His evening subject was entitled " Bishop Barnes and Elijah " in the course of which he said :

" I believe with Bishop Barnes that a crisis has definitely arisen in the religious

life of the nation," in comparing the stand taken by the Bishop of Birmingham against the ritualists in the Church of England with the reproof of Israel and the prophets of Baal by the prophet Elijah.

The Old Testament prophets, said Mr. Cross, stood for the spiritual against the material interpretation of religion, a conflict that was constantly recurring throughout history, and one which had again arisen in the Anglican Church to-day. Officialdom was always out for peace at any price, and the heads of the English Church had shown a readiness to compromise with forces whose attitude of mind marked a grave declension in religious thought.

Symbolism existed everywhere and was generally accepted. But to take the symbol for the reality was the mistaken view of the Anglo-Catholic, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, whereby the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, or God, through a formula of the priest, was repulsive. The idea that the God who ranged the universe could be "reserved" was stupid. The investing with mystery of the sacrament so that ordinary people were not expected to understand, was the first step towards the establishment of priestcraft, and history taught them that priestcraft meant tyranny and the rule of superstition.

The Anglo-Catholics were now face to face with a recrudescence, especially within the English State Church, of doctrines and practices which amounted to nothing more or less than a declension to a lower and more primitive stage of religion, in which priestcraft was rehabilitated and its magical power endorsed. The outstanding central claim was that by a priestly formula of consecration, a formula only valid on the lips of an order of priests, the bread and wine of the Sacraments became in substance, essence, and effect the body and blood of Christ. As a result of the formula Christ or God resided in those material elements, and so became proper objects of adoration and devotion, whilst the communicant who partook of them was said to 'eat and drink the body and blood of Christ,' Some even spoke of the Lord being "reserved" in the reserved bread. He (the preacher) did not believe that Christ, when He said, "This is My body; this is My blood," meant it in any but a symbolical sense. Just as when, in the Fourth Gospel, He said, "I am the Vine," He did not mean that He became actually a vine. Such interpretation was hopeless and stupid. This transubstantiation business in its crude form was so much conjuring. It was not religion, and had nothing to do with the religion of Christ. As Bishop Barnes had said, it opened the door to superstition and all its works, and, moreover, re-established a monopoly of supernatural power in the hands of a priestly craft.

There could be no neutrality in the issues of the present crisis. He (Mr. Cross) had more respect for the Anglo-Catholics who had fired their guns than for those who shrank from controversy when their faith was at stake. Bishop Barnes, like Elijah on Mount Carmel, had stood for long alone while others who shared his principles had found reasons for remaining outside the zone of fire; the whole force of Anglo-Catholic bitterness had been concentrated upon him. But Dr. Barnes's arguments remained unanswered, and his principles firm. It was the duty of every Christian to range himself or herself alongside this champion of the Protestant faith, who sought to cherish the heritage of their forefathers which had been purchased with great suffering and bitter persecution.

Temperance Meeting in York Street Church.

The Temperance Committee convened a public meeting for Wednesday, April 11th, which was held in our York Street Church. This meeting was originally the idea of Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A., and we deemed it best to carry on with his idea during his regrettable absence.

The chair was taken by the Moderator (Rev. D. J. Williams) who in the course of his address—welcomed the speakers, and clearly stated the Churches' interest in the drink question and the attendant social questions. Before calling on the speakers, the Rev. G. J. Slipper was invited to outline the ideas of the Temperance Committee, stressing the hope that our Church would be in the front line of battle against the strong drink.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Northridge of the Methodist Church, who was the first speaker voiced the approaching union of the churches on great questions, intimating that it was his first appearance in a pulpit of our denomination. As requested, he

was going to speak of his experiences in the Belfast underworld. The Churches are not in touch with the underworld life—so he thought "these people do not visit us so we must visit them." Disguising himself and his confederate, Ned Howard, he visited public houses and lodging houses. With humour and pathos, Dr. Northridge unfolded tales of misery, meanness and loneliness. Shattered lives, blighted hopes, wanton indifference to home and children, reckless living and spending. Behind all this the sinister monster—the open public houses which he thought was the largest contribution to the state of affairs he had seen. One of the main causes of drunkeness was the habit of treating—that is paying for rounds of drink. From his underworld experience, Dr. Northridge drew the following conclusions. That drink is a destroyer of influence, respectability and character. Visits to the lodging houses confirmed these opinions. Men of ability, education—many having once filled positions of trust and responsibility are to be found in the lodging houses—their presence due entirely to drink. Other men, unable to read or write, living a lonely sodden life, drowning their lonely souls in drink to escape the monotony of living evoked the remark of "the need of other social reforms." Contrasting Belfast with the United States, Dr. Northridge said he saw more "drunkenness" in one night in Belfast than he saw in the whole of his 9 months' visit to America. "Drink can be got," he said "in America, but the open public house is the cause of drunkenness. In closing he urged the churches to press forward in the campaign against the evils of our time—convinced that the failure is with the churches.

The Rev. J. Barron was the second speaker —and he stressed the hopeful outlook in America—in spite of the press. Workers are now shareholders in railways, etc. Church membership increased by over one million. Austria had made great constitutional changes, one of which was that if 20,000 people signed a petition for a Bill that request must be faced. The first petition was for local option—including amongst many other features—that drink debts are not legal. Advocating local option, Mr. Barron said the Churches stand for the expression of the Master, "the Kingdom of heaven," which was the Kingdom of happiness—that being the desired ued of life.

A vote of thanks, moved by Mr. J. Watson, seconded by Mr. R. M. Laird and supported by Mr. C. J. M'Kissack, that the thanks of the meeting be given to the speakers was passed by a show of hands.

This meeting was the most successful of any held for many years. The people of the York Street Church and the Domestic Mission being solely responsible for the splendid attendance. Whilst many may vary on minor points, all are convinced that vast social changes are needed and that drink is one of the contributions—if not entirely to the poverty and misery—at least to the lethargy of mind and heart, concerning present day evils.

Our thanks are due to York Street Church and Choir for making the meeting place possible and leading the singing. Also to the Moderator for his splendid support.

The Meeting was pleased to learn of the satisfactory progress being made by the Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A., who is at present is Switzerland. He will be pleased to hear of the splendid meeting, being keenly interested in social reform.

N. KIRKHAM, Convener.

"On Our New Manual."

My Easter holidays were spent in reading and meditating on the future of our denomination in Ireland, having received as an Easter gift from its venerable author, "A Manual detailing the origin and history of our Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland." It is a most interesting sketch, well worth careful study, and gives us much to ponder over. We were greatly pleased to receive it from Principal Gordon, and read of our past, with chastened pride.

> "The moving finger writes; and having writ
> Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit,
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

By the way, Rev. John Abernethy, M.A., of Antrim and Dublin had not, I think, a D.D. Neither Bigger in his sketch of him, nor the Dublin Gazette of 1740 gave him that title, though well worthy of it. Also, I think 1910 not 1907 is the more correct date for the inauguration of our church. While we whole-heartedly believe that union is strength, the concentrations and reactions attempted in our body since 1726 reveal the overwhelming difficulty of welding

two, and since 1830, three separate Synods into one body.

After 1726 there were two sympathetic Presbyterian Synods in Ireland. The Synod of Munster and the Presbytery of Antrim. They worked cordially together, but had separage jurisdiction. Our present "Dublin Fund" dates from then, and shows the practical sympathy of the Munster Synod with the Antrim Presbytery in its time of difficulty.

When, in 1830, another Non-Subscribing Synod, the Remonstrant Synod was formed, we find the difficulties of welding three separate bodies into unity increasing. James Martineau was then a Presbyterian minister in Dublin, and it is well for us to remember that on July 7th, 1830, he preached in our church in Cork his first published sermon on "Peace in Division" from the text "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division," and I have his letter written in 1832 as Secretary of the Irish Unitarian Society to the Cork Congregation.

The First United Meeting of the three sympathetic Synods was held on July 29th, 1835, in Strand Street, Dublin. There were gathered together at that memorable meeting eleven ministers from the Munster Synod, thirteen ministers from the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, and five ministers from the Presbytery of Antrim, with lay elders from each Synod. It was one of the finest and most harmonious gatherings ever held in our denomination in Ireland. Joseph Hutton, grandfather of R. H. Hutton was chosen as president and Dr. Armstrong as secretary, all business was signed by the three Moderators, Dr. Leslie, Moderator of the Synod of Munster, S. C. Nelson, Moderator of the Presbytery of Antrim and David Whyte, Moderator of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster. No one can now read over the printed minutes of that first meeting of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians without feeling a pride in the sterling independence combined with the deeper spiritual unity manifested in that gathering. The essence of friendship is to have the same desires and aversions, while the grand secret of human power is singleness of purpose. Note this, the relation of Northern Ministers was not broken by their settlement in the South, though removed to a separate jurisdiction. They all were of one heart and soul, and only love inspired the whole. During the next century we notice throughout the various vicissitudes of the three Synods a growing desire, if at all possible, to become one in organisation. In 1905 a very able address on "The Spirit of the Reformation" by Dr. John Campbell was read to the Annual Meeting of the Association in the First Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast, which ultimately brought into existence in 1910, the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The Munster Synod, which was the most influential partner in the United Association of 1835, declined to unite in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of 1910. Hence the United Church of 1910 is smaller than the United Association of 1835.

Principal Gordon says in reference to the concentration of 1907 that "the General Synod of the N.S.P. Church of Ireland includes (without superseding) the Antrim Presbytery and the Remonstrant Synod; but not the Munster Synod. The Association remains as before, including the Munster Synod. To some of us the crux of the position lies in the words (without superseding). The General Synod does not, of course, do away with the Antrim Presbytery nor with the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, but it does take from them their final authority which is now centred in the General Synod. The first Association meeting left separate final jurisdiction to each of the three bodies that is, each were a law unto themselves. The Munster Synod still holds to its separate final jurisdiction, whether for better or worse. Watchman! what of the future? Our revered historian in closing his 'Manual' asks us to honour and respect all who in the service of religion have striven to do their best, as drawn out in living characters. Those living characters of the past, men like Hutton, Amrstrong, Drummond, Bruce, Nelson, M'Callister, Crozier, Porter, Campbell and Montgomery, vowed at that first United gathering, that collectively and separately they would use their utmost endeavours to help each and all through the earthly cross to win the immortal crown. They all felt—

> Good fortune favours some men from their birth,
> They rise with seeming ease from height to height,
> Large and conspicuous to the public sight,
> Nor care they who goes under in the fight,
> So that upon their forehead rests the light
> Of such a crown as men may gain on earth.
> But better far to suffer for the truth,
> Than falsely flourish by another's fall;
> And tho', with saddened heart and withered youth
> A man fight on—far better, losing all—
> Hated, reviled, opprest, and hunted down
> To sink beneath the cross than rust beneath the crown.

Let us try to imitate all those past heroes of our Non-Subscribing gatherings whose truly Christian and Unitarian creed we accept :

Humanity is one : no weakest brother
Can fail or falter, sin or suffer woe,
But that the suffering reacheth every other
And all the world with him doth fainter grow.

Humanity is one : who thinks to conquer
By crushing down a weaker in the way
Knows not that in his own unreasoning rancour,
He beateth down the steps that lead to-day.

Humanity is one : thou that o'ercomest,
O thou be strong for those who are but weak,
So shall a thousand triumph where thou winnest,
And many find what few know how to seek.

G. V. C.

Ben Hur.

Indian Scriptures tell of the Akàsha, a subtle ether, pervading space, a veritable Book of Life in which all happenings are eternally recorded, the memory of God, Nature's cinematograph. It is from this record, according to the religious teaching, that sages in the past have obtained the pictures of the world's long history, such as for instance we hear of, as being contained in the Pyramids, which describe the world's evolution, which outline the Great Plan, under which the world-process is fulfilled. It is not difficult in these days of the cinematograph, wireless telephony, television, to at least admit, a basis in fact, for the alleged powers of the Prophets of Religions. They need not now, even if they were proven beyond dispute, to be termed "miraculous powers" as once they were, "babblings of infant humanity," "products of a unscientific age," and a "scientific" age adopted towards them an attitude, dignified by the name "Agnostic." However, the men who took that attitude were honest thinkers ; they were caught in the reaction against an orthodoxy, in reality more materialistic, rigid like an iron-bound coast.

Wonderful would it be, to get glimpses of Nature's cinematograph, and to Christians what more interesting, than those three and thirty years of the life of Christ ? Far more vivid, however, than the original record, might be the record built up by the enormous thought power, the vividness of the imaginings of millions centred on the alleged happenings : the Devil in fiendish form tempting Him ; the transfiguration in the Mount, the descent into Hell, the Ascension right up beyond the clouds ; the pictures so universally the possession of ancient churches, Roman and Greek, concentrated upon for centuries with all the fervour of devotion, might possibly build in the subtle ether, something more vivid than the correct history, and the new psychology might in time tell of the influence on the minds of masses of the population of that more vivid record. It is admitted that into the story of Christ's life are woven the threads of mysticism and mythology as well as history, and the first two might combine to make something more vivid than the third.

The story of "Ben-Hur" for instance, considered the most wonderful film ever shown on the screen, might possibly in two or three generations, be taken more seriously than a piece of religious fiction. Succeeding generations might depend more upon such productions for their instruction than does the present generation, and we might well imagine people two or three centuries hence, asking how much of the story is fiction, and how much is real ? Would they class the Angels and the Shepherds, the Three Kings and the Star, as fiction ? The theatre began with Mystery Plays, so far as the West is concerned. The Church in the Middle Ages, used that method of teaching, and we have the survival of it in morality plays, such as "Everyman." We are informed that such was the origin of religious ceremonial, that the ritual of Masonry was the acting out of profound truths concerning man and the universe, the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe ; and to students of ritual there are many points that Church and Masonry have in common.

The story of Ben-Hur as in the book, is not impressive ; but, it makes a wonderful picture, the blending of the Gospel story with the manners and customs of the Romans. Only the cinema could make such a play possible, and the thoughtful observer comes away reflecting on the potentiality for good the cinema possesses—what tremendous developments might be wroked out along these lines, sermons more eloquent than were ever uttered from a pulpit, might be conveyed by glorious ideals brought before the vision of the people, when it need no longer be said, "the people perish for lack of vision."

—Ullin.

Is Immortality a Delusion?

TEXT—Job 14 : 14. 'If a man die shall he live again'?

It would be impossible to find a man who has not asked himself this question in some form or other, and it would be equally impossible to find a man who has answered the question to the complete satisfaction of himself and his fellows, that is to say, answered it with the same certainty as he answers the question "Will the sun rise to-morrow"?

For the man who would be true to himself and also be honest in dealing with all the evidence at his command, it would seem that only one attitude is possible, that of reverent agnosticism.

This is the position taken up by most thinking men and women to-day. When confronted with the problem of Immortality they say "we do not know," and they adopt this attitude, not because they refuse to face the facts presented by both those who affirm and those who deny, but because the facts themselves make it impossible to adopt any other attitude but that of reverent agnosticism.

However, one can safely say that if Immortality is a delusion, it is the greatest delusion that has ever taken possession of the mind of man. The delusion that the sun went round the earth and not vice versa, a delusion from which man suffered until a few centuries ago, is nothing by comparison. Thousands of years farther back than recorded history can take us, we find men believing firmly in immortality.

Aurignacian man, whom some anthropologists date about 30,000 B.C., buried his dead with ornaments and tools for use in the next life. The ancient Egyptians, in the year 3,000 B.C., believed strongly in Immortality. In its origin, the idea of a life beyond the grave, has nothing whatever to do with Christianity. It was already an old, firmly established, deeply rooted idea when the Christian Religion appeared on the scene, comparatively late in the world's history.

There is a feeling abroad that science has proved that Immortality is a delusion. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In so far as science has any evidence to offer on the subject, it is in favour of some kind of existence after the change we call death. Whatever extreme position science may have taken up in the past (we should

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remember that the pathway of science is strewn with discarded theories just as the pathway of theology is littered with worn-out creeds and dogmas), modern science speaks in favour of, rather than against, the idea of Immortality. Science cannot even tell us what life is, much less can it tell us what death is.

Surely it is the height of dogmatism to maintain that the power we call life, this something that escapes analysis and defies definition, is completely destroyed when the body it inhabits is destroyed? How can we predict an end for something we know nothing at all about? How can a materialist expect us to take seriously his opinions about death when neither he nor anyone else can tell us what life is? Says Samuel Butler "If a man know not life, which he hath seen, how shall he know death which he hath not seen.'

If a man's personal identity survives the complete physical change which science assures us takes place once every seven years in the human body, why should it not survive the change we call death?

We need to remind ourselves that death is only a change and not an end, even of the physical body. Literally speaking, the body is never destroyed; it disintegrates and enters into new combinations. Seeing that the physical body is never completely destroyed what reason have we for thinking that the power that inhabits it is ever completely destroyed?

However, when the reason has marshalled all the evidence that can be collected to support Immortality, it is still unable to present a completely convincing case.

The evidence is so inconclusive, that at the most, one can only form a tentative opinion, based on the balance of probability.

However, there is no reason why we should allow the intellect alone to speak for or against the idea of Immortality. What of man's feelings and emotions, his ideals, hopes and aspirations? Why should these be ignored and the reason alone appealed to, on the question of Immortality?

The heart cannot give convincing reasons for leading us one way rather than another, but this does not make the heart a less reliable guide than the intellect. As Pascal so finely says, "The heart has tis reasons of which the reason knows nothing."

Why is it that man has always believed in a life beyond the grave; why has he deliberately refused to accept the evidence of his senses which tell him as plainly as anything can tell him, that death is the end? The answer is that the heart has its reasons for believing in Immortality, reasons of which the reason knows nothing. It may be possible to convince the reason that Immortality is a delusion, it never has been possible and it never will be possible to convince the heart that Immortality is a delusion.

> 'Every soul that longs and glows
> Toward things that true and noble be,
> Bears within its depth and knows
> Assurance of Eternity.'

(Summary of sermon preached in "All Souls," Elmwood Avenue, by Rev Sydney P. Whitehouse on Sunday Evening, December 4th, 1927).

S. P. WHITEHOUSE.

Reports.

Ballyclare.—The Guild met on Wednesday evening, April 5th. Miss J. Kerr and Miss A. Montgomery who had charge of the refreshments dispensed expeditiously the 'cup that cheers' and the many good things that usually go with it on these occasions, to the entire satisfaction of the many members and friends of the Guild who had mustered for the closing meeting of the season. Subsequently, Mr. H. C. Scott kept his audience keenly interested throughout his reading of a paper written by himself on the subject "Has the Church failed in her duty to Society?" Mr. Scott was decidedly affirmative in his views and produced many arguments in favour of his contention. The discussion that followed while for the most part disagreeing with the general conclusion reached was loud in praise of the excellent manner of its presentation, and somewhat amazed at the vast store of material drawn upon and carefully worked up. This was evident from the applause with which the paper was greeted at the end and the favourable comment it afterwards evoked. The remainder of the evening passed all too quickly in games and community singing. We tender our best thanks to all those whose services willingly given, in one capacity or another, made these guild meetings so interesting and enjoyable.

* * *

Bangor. The Annual meeting was held on Friday evening, February 23rd. The Committee's report and Treasurer's State-

ment of Accounts were presented by Messrs. L. Andrews, and H. Lillie. The Treasurer's statement showed a balance in hand, but if the Congregation is to maintain its existence it is felt that an appeal must be made for additional and increased subscriptions. The meeting was followed by a Social and Dance. About 70 people were present and a very enjoyable evening was spent. Our thanks are due to Mrs. Kilpatrick, Miss Simonton, Miss Smith, and Mrs. Douglas for carrying out tea arrangements.

* * *

Cairncastle.—The young people of the Old Meeting House held a Social Gathering in their School Room on March 27th, which was much enjoyed not only by themselves but by numbers of others of all the other denominations in the neighbourhood. On Easter Monday they gave a dance which was attended by close upon three hundred persons from far as well as near : some of the far places being Belfast, Dunmurry, Ballyclare and Glenarm. For this purpose the large room built last year in connection with her house called Roy Wood near Larne was generously placed at the disposal of the Congregation by Mrs. Axon, daughter of Mr. Thomas Robinson, of Sallagh, for many years treasurer of the Old Meeting House.

* * *

Holywood. A small Cake Sale and Fancy Fair was held in the School room of the First Presbyterian Non-Snbscribing) Church on Wednesday, March 28th, to assist the Church funds. Organised by the Women's Sewing Circle, the sale was well supported by the Congregation generally, and aiso by the members of the Young People's Club. A good collection of saleable articles was displayed on the various stalls, and if there had been more buyers the result would have been even better than it was. Together with donations, the amount realised by the effort was just over £100. Those in charge of the various departments were :— Cakes, Mrs. R. Steele, Mrs. W. J. Harvey and Mrs. H. Shannon. Work, Mrs. W. Patterson (President of the Sewing Circle), Mrs. James Shannon, jun., and Misses M. Shannon and Nelson. White Elephants, Mrs. Omar Nelson, Mrs. Ronald Williams, Miss Nelson and Miss Malcolm. Sweets, Mrs. Lockett, Mrs. Robinson, and Misses E. Meneely, Madge Shannon and Nan Shannon. Groceries, Mrs. James Shannon, sen., Mrs. W. Shannon and Mrs. Armstrong. Afternoon Teas, Mrs. Sharman D. Neill, Mrs. Gardiner, the Misses Neill, Miss K. Harvey and Miss J. Shannon. Bagateile, Messrs. Donald Lockett and David Kyle. Bran Tub, Miss Peggy Shannon. Some members of the Young People's Club had a very plesant outing to Ballywalter on April 6th.

* * *

Moneyrea.—A dramatic performance, "Heaps of Money," was produced by the Moneyrea Players in the Lyttle Memorial Public Elementary School, on April 12th and 13th. The plot of the play is briefly : George Cusack, a retired butler, after 50 years' service in England, returns to the Irish Free State, and settles in his native village, Dunamon, with his neice, Mrs. Bannon and her husband Andy. Mrs. Bannon shares the common belief that her uncle has heaps of money and believes that if she can keep him with her she will benefit very considerably at his death. With this in view she endeavours to retain him as a guest in her home, jealous lest he should go and reside with his nephew, Dick. Domestic squabbles arise, however, in Mrs. Bannon's home : these become so menacing that uncle George is compelled to seek different lodgings—much to the chagrin of his niece he goes to reside with his nephew. The change leads to very pronounced bitterness and quarrelling between Andy and Dick ; a fight ensues in a public house, and Uncle George, for the sake of peace, in the village and the salvation of his own soul, is advised by Canon Mythen to quit his relations and take furnished apartments elsewhere. These are obtained in the house of Madame Parsley whom Uncle George eventually marries. In order to pacify his relations a marriage settlement is made which secures their interests—the niece and nephew are to get all their uncle has at the time of his death. Three weeks after the marriage Uncle George dies and the last scene of the play finds the relatives gathered together with mixed feelings of sorrow at his death and joy in expectation of a legacy. The Attorney, who attends to explain the contents of the marriage settlement, informs them that after examining all the papers the only document of any importance he could find was an annuity policy purchased for the sum of one thousand pounds. The niece and nephew conclude that this means £500 each, and are quite unable to understand that the Annuity lapsed the moment the uncle died. Andy then arrives and, with

his usual hot temper succeeds in obtaining possession of the Deed—with this in his possession he considers himself sure of the money and the play ends with his shout of triumph. The part of Uncle George was played by Rev. A. Whitford—Miss R. Kennedy was exceptionally good in the character of Mrs. Bannon, his niece—it was evident to the large audience assembled that she understood the character she was playing. Andy was taken by James Frame, who was quite at home on the stage and produced much amusement by his peculiar mannerisms and bursts of temper. Robert Hill played the part of Paddy with distinction. Canon Mythen was very ably represented by Robert Millen; Samuel Maxwell and Miss Bryce were very good as Mr. and Mrs. Dick Cusack. Miss Mary Fisher did exceeding well as Madam Parsley, while the parlour-maid, Julia, was appropriately played by Miss Mary M'Cauley. Albert Fisher was excellent as the Postman. The Publican, Mr. Cassidy, was safe in the hands of Robert Fisher, who was ably supported by his barman, Thomas M'Cauley. Edward Fisher and E. Miskelly played the parts of cattle-dealers excellently. Robert M'Cauley showed exceptional ability as carman; while Messrs. W. Bryce and James Maxwell delighted the audience with their representation of two inebriated farmers. Sydney Bryce did very well as the attorney, as did also his clerk, William Fisher. The financial results of the play were very satisfactory. The organisers aimed at making £20; this sum, we are glad to record, was exceeded.

* * *

Mountpottinger.—It is with regret we have to record the loss of another member whose name has been on the Stipend Roll for a great many years. On April 15th, Mrs. Douglas passed peacefully away at her residence 34 Madrid Street, after a somewhat protracted illness which was patiently borne. For a number of years past Mrs. Douglas's health had prevented her from attending the Church Services but her interests in the Congregation were as strong as ever and her grandchildren have faithfully maintained the family traditions by their excellent record in the Sunday School. The interment took place on Tuesday, April 17th, Rev. A. Whitford officiating. We have to thank the Presbytery whose members have held loyally to their engagements for filling the Pulpit.

Old Presbyterian Congregation, Larne and Kilwaughter.—Under the auspices of the Larne Branch of the Women's League a most enjoyable "Easter at Home" was held in the schoolroom on Thursday evening, 5th April. There was a large and representative attendance of members and friends of the congregation and we were specially pleased to welcome friends from the newly formed branches at Ballycarry and Ballyclare, as well as the representatives from Glenarm and Raloo. With a few words of welcome, the president, Miss S. E. Kinder, initiated the proceedings, and hoped that their meeting would be a pleasant one. This proved to be the case, for no effort was spared to interest and attract those present. Competitions of various kinds were organised while the work table, cake table, flower and confectionery table claimed the attention and support of all. A very intriguing corner invited a venture into the secrets of palmistry, while near by some fine photographs of old Larne and Inver were displayed. Excellent refreshments at nominal charges were provided throughout the evening. About mid way through the proceeding a short programme of music was introduced: songs and recitations, and thanks were expressed to Mrs. Stevenson, Miss Woods and Miss Esler for their rendering of songs. To the Misses A. Laing and L. Drummond for vocal duets and to Miss M. Wilson for recitations and to Mrs. W. R. Drummond for kindly playing accompaniments. In every way this was a most enjoyable evening and it is gratifying to record that over £30 was realized as a result of the effort.

* * *

York Street.—Since the departure of the Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A., the services have been conducted by the ministers of the Presbytery of Antrim. It is pleasant to be able to report that there has been no falling off on the part of the congregation. The church is still full on Sunday evenings, and if the loyalty of the large congregation gathered in so short a time ever needed testing, it has been tested now and not found wanting. Any fear that many of our people are "hearers" only has been dispelled. A weekly letter is sent to us by Mr. Agnew, this is eagerly looked forward to and expected, and is read at the morning and evening services. Mr. Agnew in turn is the recipient of many letters from the members, these being sent to him at the beginning of each week, so, in this way, he

keeps in touch with the members, and all that is going on. The Guild, under its own Committee, still continues its activites on Saturday nights. Of late, it has provided a variety of entertainment, and learning that could not well be surpassed. There have been, amongst other things, socials, a talk by Mr. J. D. Boyd, B.Sc., of Queen's, on the " Evolution of the Brain ; " debates on " Local Option " and " Should Bachelors be Taxed ? " Also a talk by Mrs. Reid, on " Leysin," the place where our minister has for the time taken up his abode ; and so on. During this past month, the church has been bereft of three people closely connected with it. Rev. Wm. Weatherall, our present minister's grand-father, respected and well remembered by some of the older members in this place, died in London at the grand old age of 88. Mrs. M'Calmont, an old lady, kind, gentle and cheery, one of our most faithful attenders at service, and a worker besides. She was known to many visitors to York Street, also passed away after a short illness. And then Mrs. Wharton the wife of one of our most esteemed and respected members. To all the near relatives and friends we wish to express our most sincere sympathy with them in this their time of trouble. The Memorial service was held on Sunday, 15th April.

Obituary.

REV. WILLIAM WEATHERALL

We regret to announce the death of the Rev. William Weatherall, which took place at his residence, 65 Grove Road, Woodford, London, on the 27th March. He was in his 88th year, and for some time past had been confined to his room.

Mr. Weatherall spent the earlier years of his life in Liverpool where he was born, and was a convert to Unitarianism chiefly through the preaching of the Rev. Charles Beard. Subsequently he removed to London, and on the recommendation of the Rev. Fletcher Williams entered the ministry in the year 1883 as Missionary of the Blackfriars Mission, then connected with the Stamford Street Chapel of which the Rev. W. Copeland Bowie was minister. After two years in London, he was appointed Missionary of the Belfast Domestic Mission, where he spent 5 years. In 1890 he received a call to Moira Congregation in connection with the Presbytery of Bangor, and three years later removed to Killinchy Church in the same Presbytery. In 1899 he returned to Moira and laboured there until his retirement in the year 1921. His work is remembered and appreciated still in Moira, where, in addition to his pastoral duties he was greatly interested in educational matters, being Manager of Lisnasharken School and Chairman of the local School Committee.

A regular attendant at the various meetings in connection with the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, he evinced a great interest in the progress of the Church and its associations.

He leaves two sons both of whom are well known as ministers of the Unitarian body. Rev. J. H. Weatherall, M.A., is Minister of Essex Church London, and Rev. W. A. Weatherall is minister of the Congregation at Cork. His grandson, Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A., is minister of the York Street Church, Belfast. In addition to his sons, he leaves two daughters, Mrs. W. J. Agnew of Moira, and Miss Margaret Weatherall who resided with her father, and nursed him throughout his last illness.

To all the deepest sympathy will be extended by a wide circle of friends here in Ireland.

MARRIAGE.

BURTON-M'KEGG,—On April 7th, 1928, in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, York Street, Belfast, by the Rev. Alexander O. Ashworth, William Henry Burton to Jeannette Margaret M'Kegg.

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